

ISSUE 16

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# STAR REACH



**MURPHY'S  
LAW**

# LETTERS

1 March 1979  
Oakland, CA

This issue marks the fifth anniversary of STAR\*REACH (which had its first issue in April, 1974). Five years. Can you believe it? It's been a long time and a lot of innocence lost and experience gained, while at the same time things just seem to be beginning to open up.

Five years ago, what was there in graphic-story fantasy and science fiction? Not much. Now there's HEAVY METAL, ANDROMEDA, FIRST KINGDOM, Byron Preiss' succession of works (most recently EMPIRE and THE STARS MY DESTINATION), Marvel Comics is jumping into the arena soon and more and more book companies are looking at this field very closely. I'm proud to have been part of this building stream and hope that I'll be able to make my contribution in the future.

We have a memorable issue with which to commemorate this anniversary. First, you'll note our move up to the magazine size dimensions, which we expect will give our artwork that much more impact. Secondly, our contributions are among our best ever. Regular contributor Ken Steacy has teamed with a couple of his Toronto compatriots to bring us some very powerful pieces: the cover painted by Paul Rivoche (whose work has previously appeared in ANDROMEDA) and the story "Murphy's Law" drawn by Don Marshall (also from ANDROMEDA and before that, ORB). Both of these guys are welcome additions. Then Lee Marrs returns with the third chapter of "Stark's Quest," one of the most cohesive and stimulating storylines seen on these pages. The final chapter is scheduled for next issue.

A book anthology of the best of the earlier issues of STAR\*REACH is (slowly) in the works; there should be more definite news next time around. If you want to keep absolutely current with what's going on here, we're now regularly (every two or three months) issuing a "Star\*Reach Letter" with the latest news plus profiles of our contributors. Send six self-addressed stamped envelopes to get on our mailing list.

Please note with our price change the subscription rates have been adjusted as well.

See you next issue.

*Mike Friedrich*

Dear Mike,

I just finished it and loved it, but I'm still not sure that I've absorbed it all. Referring, of course, to the conclusion of Gray Lyda's "Tempus Fugit" series. On one level, I think about the story's long eons and the interactions of earth, history, and the enigmatic Ultras. On another level, consider the journeys of evolving consciousness through mind's memory, and how it travels backwards to subtly reinterpret memories and perceptions to give meaning to the present and future. Major changes in our mentalities are evoked by alterations as basic as the Ultras' remaking of history and evolution.

Lyda's story was the most original graphic story I've seen in a long time, in plot, theme, and artistic style. The only person I can think of who has expanded the possibilities of comic storytelling as much is Justin Green ("Binky Brown Meets the Holy Virgin Mary; Sacred and the Profane"). The whole series should be brought together in its own issue. The only fault I found was the production problem of poor clarity due to heavy use of black spaces. This story isn't in the traditional territory of over-underground comic and your ground-level magazine is the right format for it. If Lyda ventures into entirely new territory or into more Ultra stories, I hope it's equally thought and eye-consuming.

Leighton Ku  
1801 Fairview Street  
Berkeley, CA 94703

Dear Mike,

"The Sacred and the Profane" is the best comic story I've read since Don McGregor's "Panther's Rage" a few years ago. I really think one of the best aspects of the story was its presentation — stretching it out over a few issues made me wait even more anxiously for the next issue. Pass on my compliments to Dean and Ken for a fine, intriguing work of art. I was brought up a Roman Catholic, but have since moved away from the faith. This story helped me put my feelings towards my religion in a different perspective, and I appreciate it when a story does that for me. Tell Dean and Ken that in that sense they are on the level of Ellison and Vonnegut, true masters.

Although that story was certainly the highlight in STAR\*REACH this year, all of the other stories you published were of much better quality than can be found elsewhere. I eagerly await more of Steve's "Quicksilver Serpent" and Lee's "Stark's Quest." "Tempus Fugit" has been a bit hard for me to follow, but I think that is from my habit of reading STAR\*REACH from cover to cover. By the last story my mind might not be too clear.

As for your other publications: I wasn't too pleased with CODY STARBUCK. I think Chaykin has cheated us on this character, none of the stories seem to follow the others, and Cody's roguish-like character and sense of adventure present in the first story (has it really been five years?) have been lost. He doesn't even look the same. You called it a "punk comic" and I couldn't agree with you more — the graphics were nice but the substance stunk just like punk rock stinks.

PARSIFAL, on the other hand, was beautiful. How can the big companies continue to force artists into maintaining set standards when so many are capable of art like this? Craig Russell is great, no bout about it. The emotions captured in those middle panels on page 13 are magnificent — it's like watching a good actor play out the part of Klingor. Patrick Mason's fine prose style contributed greatly, also. If "Sacred" was the best comic story I've read in years, then PARSIFAL is the best single comic I've bought. Ever.

Terry R. Coyle  
515 N. Sycamore St.  
Monticello, IA 52310

Dear Star\*Reach People,

Thank you for one of the most enjoyable magazines I've ever read. Howie Chalkin's CODY STARBUCK is something like what we should see more of. How about some more "punk" comics in color? You know, Starlin, Russell, Simonson, Brunner, Leialoha and of course, more Chaykin.

Steve Messick  
R.D. 1, Box 78  
Georgetown, Delaware 19947

Mike!

Just a quick note that is in fact long overdue. You deserve a big hand for publishing what I thought was one of the best comic of 1978 — CODY STARBUCK. Really a fine, fine book that had more mood than is usually found in a comic. Howie really gave the space-fantasy genre a much needed kick in the balls!

Fred Hembeck  
199 Smith Avenue  
Kingston, NY 12401

STAR\*REACH #16 (April, 1979) is published 4 times a year by Star\*Reach Productions, P.O. Box 2328, Berkeley, CA 94702; Mike Friedrich, editor and publisher. ©Copyright 1979 Star\*Reach Productions. World Rights Reserved. The cover art ©1979 Paul Rivoche and Ken Steacy. "Murphy's Law" ©1979 Ken Steacy and Don Marshall. "Stark's Quest" ©1979 Lee Marrs. Address all inquiries c/o Star\*Reach Productions.

Contributions are not encouraged, though eventually read; warning: no return postage and it'll be trashed.

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DESPITE THE INNERGRO MOVEMENT'S BIGOTRY, STARK IS DRAWN TO ONE OF THEIR PHYSFIT CENTERS, WHERE THE HOMEY ATMOSPHERE REMINDS HER OF HER CHILDHOOD AMONG GURUS AND FOSTERS.



BUT IN A HORROR OF DISCOVERY, STARK'S EXTRASENSORY POWERS RECEIVE ALL TWEN'S IMPRESSIONS AND FEELINGS WHILE LOVEMAKING—AN OVERLOAD SHE CAN'T ENDURE. THE PROBABILITY OF CRIPPLED ALIEN LONELINESS HAUNTS HER.



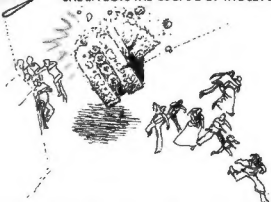
MY GOD!  
I CAN'T SHUT  
OFF HIS  
IMAGES!!

TWEN'S OFFER OF FRIENDSHIP BRINGS STARK TO AN INNERGRO FESTIVAL FEATURING CANDIDATES—AND A RAID BY THE HANDYMEN!



OVERWHELMED BY THE REMEMBERED PAIN AND RECURRING NIGHTMARES OF THE CONFORMITY PROCESS, STARK DESERTS TWEN AND THE OTHERS, LEAVING WHATEVER WARPERS PRESENT TO BE ARRESTED.

JUST AS SHE IS CONDEMNING HERSELF AS COWARD FOR FLEEING, FATE GIVES HER A SECOND CHANCE AND SHE EFFECTS THE ESCAPE OF THOSE ARRESTED BY TELEKINETICALLY TOPPLING AN IMMENSE CORNICE ...



CRACK! DOWN DOWN  
DIRECT YES CRACK!

... AS SHE RECOGNIZES ONE OF THE HANDYMEN AS HER LIFEMATE!



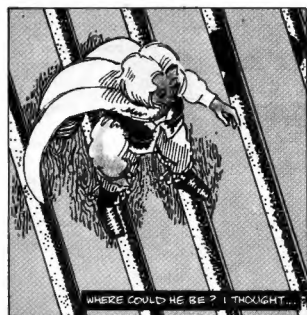
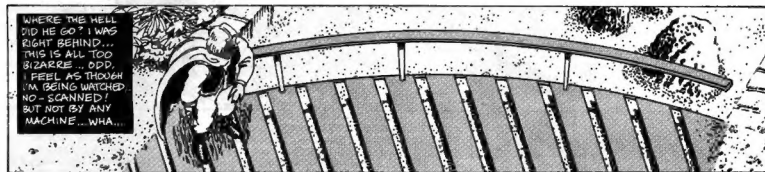
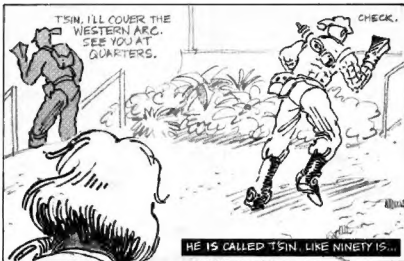
FUELED BY THE HOPE OF FINDING SECURITY, RESCUE, STARK PURSUES THE HANDYMAN INTO THE SHADOWS OF A CITYSTATE FACING A WATERSHED—A CRUCIAL PIVOT IN HISTORY. WILL HER WORLD CONTINUE ON ITS PATH OF HATRED AND FEAR, OR SHIFT TO A NEW LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING AND COOPERATION? THE ELECTION OF THE NEW CO-CHAIR COULD BE THE KEYSTONE FOR POSITIVE CHANGE IN THIS CITYSTATE IN TRANSITION, THIS WORLD OF ...

# STARK'S QUEST

TALE THREE:  
ANSWERS

©1979 LEE MARRS-







'LEVEN! WE THOUGHT  
YOU WERE DEAD!!!  
IT IS YOU ....

HARMONY TO YOU,  
LITHE ONE! AH,  
WE MISSED YOU SO...  
THIS IS AMAZING!  
UNBELIEVABLE!  
HOW DID YOU EVER  
ESCAPE FROM  
SECTORCORE?



IT'S A LONG  
TALE, TRULY.  
WELL,  
NINETY, I  
WAS....



NINETY?! WHAT?  
WHAT'S HAPPENED  
TO YOU? I AM FORT;  
NINETY'S BROTHER.  
DON'T YOU EVEN  
RECOGNIZE ME?  
REMEMBER  
WHEN...

YOU'RE FORT'?  
UH... I DON'T  
REMEMBER...



...SO THE CONFORMITY PROCESS  
BLEW MY MEMORY--TO A LARGE  
EXTENT. IT WAS FROM SEEING  
YOUR IMAGE IN MY FILES THAT  
I THOUGHT I RECOGNIZED  
YOU. YOU DO LOOK...  
EXACTLY...

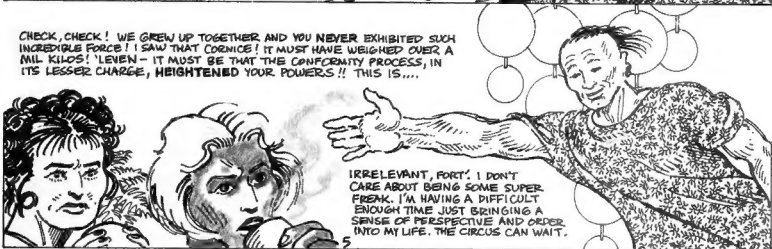
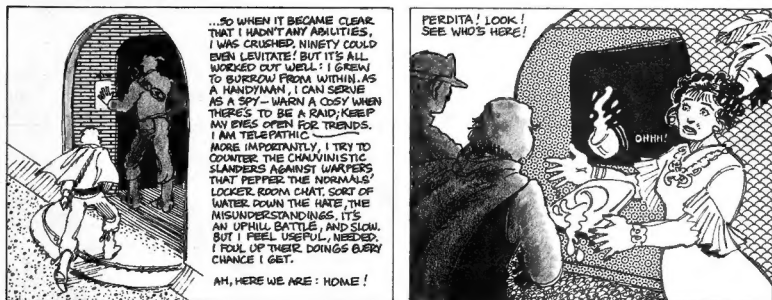
CHECK. ALTHOUGH  
WE WERE BORN  
2 YEARS APART,  
WE DID RESEMBLE  
EACH OTHER TO  
AN UNCANNY DEGREE.  
HA! REMEMBER  
THE NIGHT YOU...  
OH, CHECK, YOU  
DON'T... DON'T...



SO...  
NINETY  
IS...

LOOK, 'LEVEN. IT DOESN'T SEEM THAT THOSE  
SECTORCORE BASTARDS SET YOU STRAIGHT  
ON THE WHOLE SCOPE. NINETY WAS ARRESTED  
AT THE SAME TIME YOU WERE... IT WAS THE  
EQUINOX EXPOSITION B/E. UNLESS HE WAS...  
SAVED... AS YOU WERE -- HE MUST BE DEAD!

... THEN I AM ALONE.



THE NEXT MORNING

IT'LL TAKE TIME TO ADJUST, BUT YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE AFRAID OF USING YOUR ABILITIES WITH US. WE CAN TRY TO JOG YOUR LIL' OLE BRAIN CELLS, 'LEVEN.

SO WE CAN COMMUNICATE DIRECTLY. I SEE... I CAN EXPLORE WHAT YOU RECALL OF OUR CHILDHOOD...

YES. YOU AND PERDITA CRECHED TOGETHER HERE. YOU GO-DOWN MEMORY LANE....



LET'S SEE... THIS SERIES IS THE EARLIEST. HERE WE TWO ARE AT DREADFUL ECO-CAMP...

HA! LOOK AT THOSE SKINNY LEGS!!



"WOO! FOSTER 10! WE STAYED UP ALL NIGHT AND THE SUN CAME UP, AND..."

HOURS PASS



"...AND THIS IS THE CITY OF DESTRUCTION, PERDITA..."



"...THE SECTORWIDE PHYSFIT AWARD, AEROBATICS JUNIOR, TO... 1128 STARK!"

ALL OF THIS SEEMS VAGUELY FAMILIAR... AS THOUGH IT WERE A PLAY I'D SEEN, BUT NOTHING TRULY CLICKS!



"1, 1128 STARK, TAKE YOU, 9100 TSN, AS LIFEMATE FOR THE EXTENT OF OUR BONDED FEELINGS, TO CARE AND TO CHERISH..."



YOU KNOW, PERDITA, WHAT DISTRESSES ME MOST ABOUT ALL THIS "UNKNOWN" IS... WELL... IF I CAN'T BE INTIMATE WITH ANYONE! I TOLD YOU ABOUT THAT EVENING... IF MY OWN EXTRASENSORY ABILITIES PRECLUDE LOVEMAKING, THE BLEAK FUTURE IS SO DARK THAT I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN...

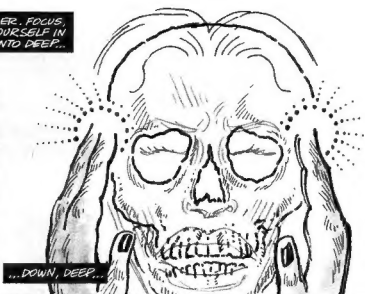
HEY, NO, NO! BALANCE, DEAR. I KNOW EVERY SHARED DETAIL OF YOUR ADOLESCENT SEX LIFE. I WAS A PART OF IT! NO DIFFICULTY! IT MUST ONLY BE A TEMPORARY BYPRODUCT OF THE CONFORMITY PROCESS. BECAUSE AS YOU'LL GAIN BACK YOUR SCREENING ABILITIES WITH TIME, I'M SURE OF IT.



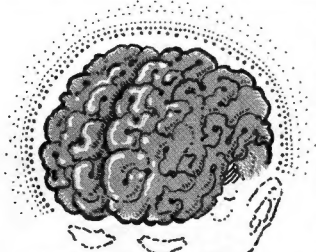
LET'S GIVE THE MEMORY ONE MORE TRY. YOU WERE THE ONE TO GIVE ME MY NICKNAME, 'LOST ONE'. FIRST LOVE, WE SHARE A LIFETIME OF GIVING, EVEN IF YOU DON'T RECALL. AS A HEALER, LET ME EXAMINE YOUR SCARRED MIND. AND MAYBE I CAN HELP YOU HEAL SOME OF THE DAMAGE THERE.



RELAX, 'LEVEN. I AM HEALER. FOCUS. HARMONY, RELAX. EASE YOURSELF IN MY HANDS... DOWN, DOWN INTO DEEP...



...DOWN, DEEP...



YES, EXTENSIVE SCARRING... MOST MEMORY BANKS SMOOTH...



NEW COURSES OF ENERGY FLOW... PHYSICAL RUIN IN ONLY THAT AREA. PULSATING IRREGULARLY. RELAX... NOTHING TO RELEASE... SCARS... BALANCE, 'LEVEN, UP, OUT. IT'S OVER.

NO! IT'S NOT FAIR!!



I'M SO SORRY. THERE'S NOTHING TO BE DONE. IRREPARABLE SCARRING.

LOST! MY WHOLE LIFE LOST! NO!!!



FORT'! IN HERE!



HARMONY!  
CALM TO  
YOU, LEVEN.  
RELAX...  
EASE, SLOW,  
COUNT YOUR  
PULSE...  
SLOW, SLOW,  
CALM, YES,  
HARMONY!..

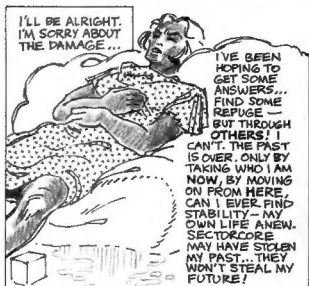
'LEVEN!  
FOCUS...  
CENTER ON  
YOURSELF.  
CALM, CALM.  
IT'S GOING  
TO BE FINE.  
YES, STEADY,  
SLOW, SLOW,  
DEEP, DEEP.



YOU ARE NOT LOST!  
YOU HAVE YOURSELF:  
ALL THAT THE YEARS  
HAVE MADE YOU.  
YOU HAVE SURVIVED.  
YOU ARE ALIVE AND  
WHOLE. DON'T EVER  
DESPAIR, DEAR...



YOU HAVE US, YOUR FRIENDS.



I'LL BE ALRIGHT.  
I'M SORRY ABOUT  
THE DAMAGE...

I'VE BEEN  
HOPING TO  
GET SOME  
ANSWERS...  
FIND SOME  
REFUGE...  
BUT THROUGH  
OTHERS! I  
CAN'T. THE PAST  
IS OVER. ONLY BY  
TAKING WHO I AM  
NOW, BY MOVING  
ON FROM HERE,  
CAN I EVER FIND  
STABILITY— MY  
OWN LIFE ANEW.  
SECTORCORE  
MAY HAVE STOLEN  
MY PAST... THEY  
WOULDN'T STEAL MY  
FUTURE!



'LEVEN... ALIVE! I CAN BARELY BELIEVE IT. SHE PROBABLY IS  
SAFE... NEW IDENTKIT AND HER MOBILE JET WOULD PREVENT  
DETECTION... IF THEY ARE AFTER HER, THEY MAY NOT CARE AT ALL.

SHE ALWAYS WAS SMART, BUT... HOW MUCH OLDER SHE LOOKS! WHAT A  
HORROR THAT PROGRESS MUST HAVE BEEN... HER CLEVERNESS USED TO  
GET US ALL IN TROUBLE... HA! REMEMBER WHEN SHE FUSED OUR OL'  
GURU'S SHOWER DOOR SHUT, AND MIXED PUDDING IN THE PIPES TO...



THE FOLLOWING DAY

I APPRECIATE THE RIDE,  
'LEVEN. WE'RE HAVING AN  
EARLY CLEARING MEET  
AT THE CAMPAIGN CENTER.



**TALAN**  
THE BEST FOR CO-CHAIR 12

FROM THE BEGINNING,  
SHE'S THE BEST CHANCE  
WE WARPERS HAVE TO  
ACHIEVE EQUALITY!  
SHE'S ALWAYS BEEN  
OPEN ABOUT HER  
WARRIOR SYMPATHIES,  
ALTHOUGH SHE ISN'T  
ONE OF US.

HOW LONG HAVE  
YOU WORKED ON  
TALAN'S CAMPAIGN?

HA! DON'T GET ME STARTED! I DON'T MEAN TO PROMOTE EXACTLY. ACTUALLY, MANY WARPERS FEEL SECURE IN THE WAY THINGS ARE NOW. THEY WOULD RATHER REMAIN SECRET, BEING CERTAIN THAT ANY ALLEVIATION OF THE PERSUASION WOULD ONLY BE TEMPORARY. THEN THEY WOULD BE EXPOSED, VULNERABLE. THE NORMALS HAVE NO EDGE ON CONSERVATISM...

BUT TRULY, I THINK WE'VE GOT TO TAKE ANY CHANCE WE CAN! NOTHING WILL GET BETTER FOR US UNTIL...

OH... THERE I GO... OFF INTO COSMIC STABILITIES AGAIN. HEY, I REALLY HAVE TO GET INSIDE!



SEE YOU FOR SUPPER, TOMORROW, CHECK?

I MUST RULE OUT ONE LAST CHANCE BEFORE STARTING OVER AFRESH... ONE LAST FACT ABOUT THE PAST.



NO, I CAN'T RISK ENTERING. I'LL JUST WAIT



STARK!!?

DR. VEGAR! I HAD TO SEE YOU AGAIN.



THIS IS DELIGHTFUL! I WAS HOPING TO CHECK YOUR STATUS. HOW ARE YOU FEELING?



STABLE BUT TROUBLED, DOCTOR. YOU WERE GOOD TO ME WHILE I WAS BEING BLACKMAILED INTO THE CO-CHAIR'S MURDER CASE, SO I FIGURED I COULD COME TO YOU. YOUR SYMPATHY MEANT A GREAT DEAL THEN. I WONDER IF... THAT IS... I NEED YOUR HELP AGAIN. YOU SHOWED ME MY OWN CONFIDENTIAL FILES, BUT I NEED OTHER INFORMATION TOO. UH... COULD YOU TELL ME...

YES?

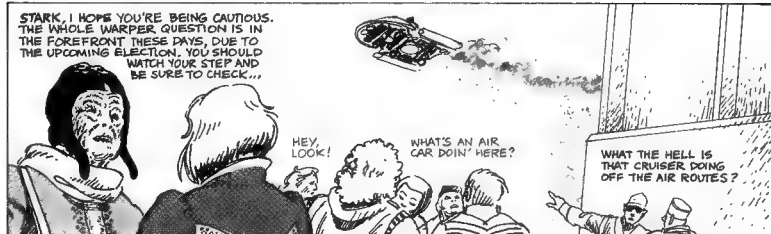


WAS I THE ONLY WARTER GIVEN A LESSER CHARGE OF THE CONFORMITY PROCESS? OR WERE THERE OTHERS ARRESTED AT THE SAME TIME? MAYBE SOME OF THEM WERE BROUGHT THROUGH ALIVE? I'M NOT ON SOME SORT OF SECURITY INFILTRATION MISSION, TRULY. I JUST NEED TO KNOW FOR... PERSONAL REASONS, DOCTOR.

YOU SEE, MY LIFE MATE WAS ONE OF THEM.



NO, I'M SORRY, STARK. YOU WERE THE ONLY ONE NEEDED BY SECTORCORE, SO THE OTHERS RECEIVED THE USUAL PROCESS. NONE SURVIVED. IT WAS A TRUE SCIENTIFIC BREAKTHROUGH THAT YOU DID...



STARK, I HOPE YOU'RE BEING CAUTIOUS. THE WHOLE WARDER QUESTION IS IN THE FOREFRONT THESE DAYS, DUE TO THE UPCOMING ELECTION. YOU SHOULD WATCH YOUR STEP AND BE SURE TO CHECK...

HEY, LOOK!

WHAT'S AN AIR CAR DOIN' HERE?

WHAT THE HELL IS THAT CRUISER DOING OFF THE AIR ROUTES?



WE CAN'T STOP!!

THE CAR'S HEADING RIGHT FOR US! LOOK!

WHAT ON EARTH...

WHAT? A FORCE... I FEEL A FORCE... MINDWARPERS BEAMING... OUT HERE?



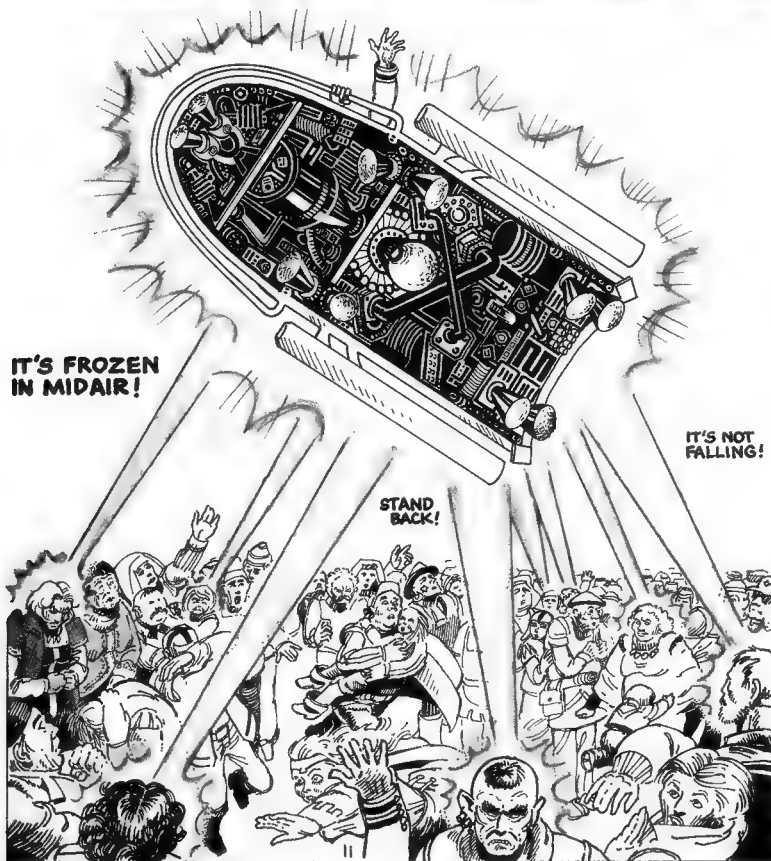
WE'RE OUT OF CONTROL!!  
HELP!!

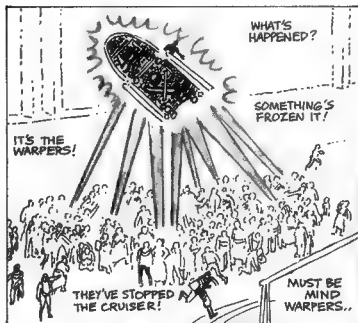
STARK, WHAT IS IT?  
'LEVEN, SPEAK TO ME!  
YOU'VE GONE SO PALE...

IT'S GOING TO CRASH!

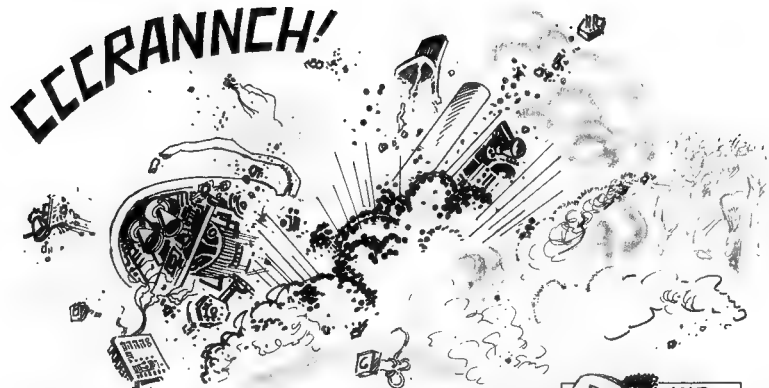
RUN, LACEY, RUN!!

ALL OTHERS HERE - FOCUS UP! FOCUS ON THE CAR!





# CCCRANNCH!



THEY'RE  
SAFE!!  
NO ONE'S  
HURT!

I'VE NEVER  
SEEN ...  
ANYTHING  
LIKE IT !!

RANCE  
I NEVER  
KNEW  
YOU WERE  
A...

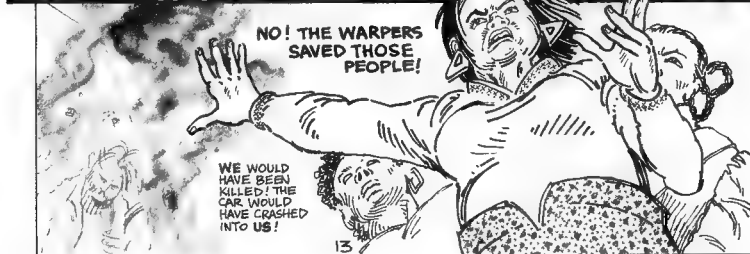


HALT  
WHERE  
YOU  
STAND!



SCANNERS ON!  
MINDWARPERS  
IN VICINITY!

COPS! CHECK  
THE CRASH!  
QUICK TIME!



NO! THE WARPERS  
SAVED THOSE  
PEOPLE!

WE WOULD  
HAVE BEEN  
KILLED! THE  
CAR WOULD  
HAVE CRASHED  
INTO US!





IT WAS FANTASTIC! THEY SAY A CRUISER JUST HUNG IN MIDAIR. LIKE MAGIC, IN ONE MOMENT.



THOSE WARPERS ARE AMAZING. I GREW UP WITH ONE - BEST PAL - DIDN'T KNOW IT, OF COURSE. HOW HE COULD SWIM! I WAS SURE WE'D BE LIKE BROTHERS FOR OUR WHOLE LIVES. HELL... I WAS ONLY 14 YRS. OLD WHEN THE HANDYMEN ARRESTED HIS FAMILY...



WELL, I THINK IT'S ABOUT TIME THINGS CHANGED. THESE HANDYMEN - BARGING IN ANY PLACE THEY PLEASE AND TAKING OVER! OUTRAGEOUS!! IT'S TOO MUCH! IN ALL THESE YEARS, WARPERS HAVE NEVER DONE ANY OF THE HORRIBLE THINGS THAT SECTORCORE IS ALWAYS THREATENING THAT THEY'D DO! HA! SECTORCORE JUST WANTS US HOPPING TO THEIR TUNE...



YOU MUST FORGIVE AN OLD WOMAN'S CURIOSITY, BUT I FEEL RESPONSIBLE BRINGING YOU THROUGH THE PROCESS... AND ALL. STARK, WHAT DO YOU INTEND TO DO NOW? DO YOU HAVE ANY PLANS?

ONLY EMBRYO ONES...



OVERHEARD COMMENTS OF AN AFTERNOON—EVEN SUCH AN EVENTFUL ONE AS THIS—ARE HARDLY A BASIS FOR DECISIONS. BUT SO MUCH SEEMS TO POINT TOWARD A DEEP-SEATED SHIFT IN OUR SOCIETY. A CHANGE TO A MORE OPEN WAY OF LIFE. PERHAPS THE PERSECUTION OF US WARPERS HAS RUN ITS COURSE. AT LEAST THAT'S THE IMPRESSION I'VE GOTTEN FOR... HA! ...FOR AS LONG AS I REMEMBER.

HMM... PERHAPS SO, STARK.



WHAT DOES THIS OPTIMISTIC VIEW HAVE TO DO WITH YOU PERSONALLY? YOU HAVE A JOB, I KNOW, BUT...

WELL, A FRIEND IS INVOLVED WITH CO-CHAIR TALAN'S BID FOR ELECTION. TALAN SEEMS COMMITTED TO A BETTER STATUS FOR US. HER PRESENTATION AT THE INNERGRO FESTIVAL WAS BOTH BRILLIANT AND MOVING.



UNLIKE MOST PEOPLE, I HAVE THE CHANCE TO START OVER. I NEED TO BUILD A NEW LIFE PIECE BY PIECE. WHY NOT LEND MY PARTICULAR TALENTS TO THE CAMPAIGN, EVEN ON A SELF-INTEREST LEVEL—IT'S A GOOD CAUSE.



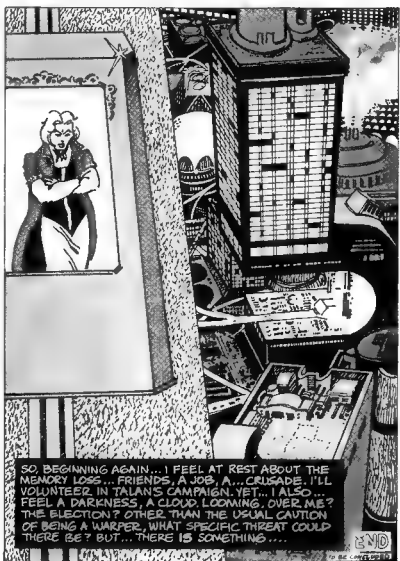
WHY NOT, STARK? OH, ALL THAT CAN HAPPEN IS... YOU GET KILLED. DON'T UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF THE REACTIONARY FORCES. TAKE CARE. IF YOU EVER NEED ME... EVEN TO MERELY TALK THINGS OVER—PLEASE CALL. HARMONY TO YOU.



STABILITY TO YOU.

THIS TRICK WITH THE CRUISER WAS PLANNED TO FOOL US! THE CRAZY WARPERS MUST HAVE CAUSED THE WRECK THEMSELVES! THEY ARE ALIEN, DEVIANTS, EVIL! POSSESSORS OF STRANGE POWERS! YOU CAN'T TRUST THEM! THEY WANT TO RULE US, CONQUER US.

**THEY MUST BE DESTROYED!!**

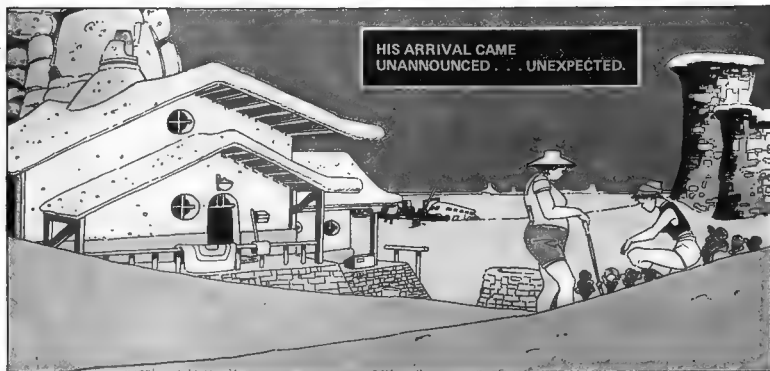


SO, BEGINNING AGAIN... I FEEL AT REST ABOUT THE MEMORY LOSS... FRIENDS, A JOB, A... CRUSADE. I'LL VOLUNTEER IN TALAN'S CAMPAIGN. YET... I ALSO... FEEL A DARKNESS A CLOUD LOOMING OVER US? THE ELECTION? OTHER THAN THE USUAL CAUTION OF BEING A WARTER, WHAT SPECIFIC THREAT COULD THERE BE? BUT... THERE IS SOMETHING...

END

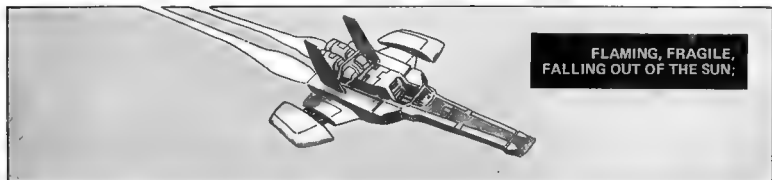
# MURPHY'S LAW

ORIGINAL STORY: KEN STEACY  
TEXT: JEFFREY MORGAN  
ILLUSTRATION: DON MARSHALL

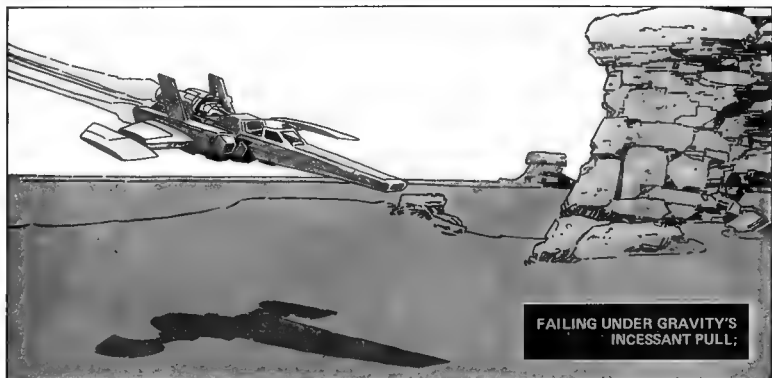




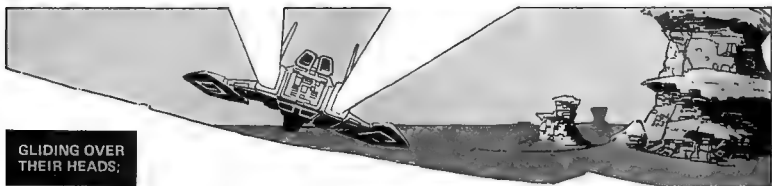
AT FIRST,  
ALL THEY COULD SEE  
WAS THE SHIP:



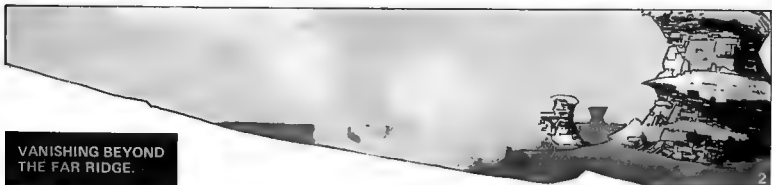
FLAMING, FRAGILE,  
FALLING OUT OF THE SUN;



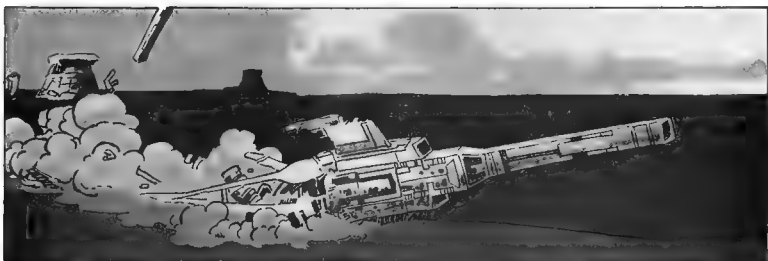
FAILING UNDER GRAVITY'S  
INCESSANT PULL;



GLIDING OVER  
THEIR HEADS;



VANISHING BEYOND  
THE FAR RIDGE.

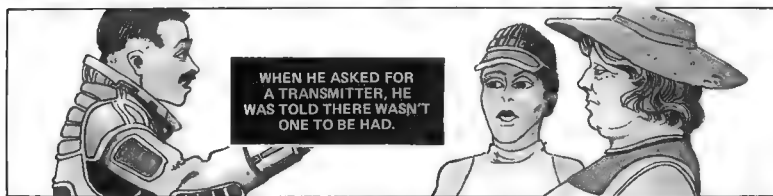
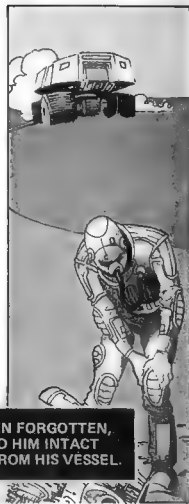




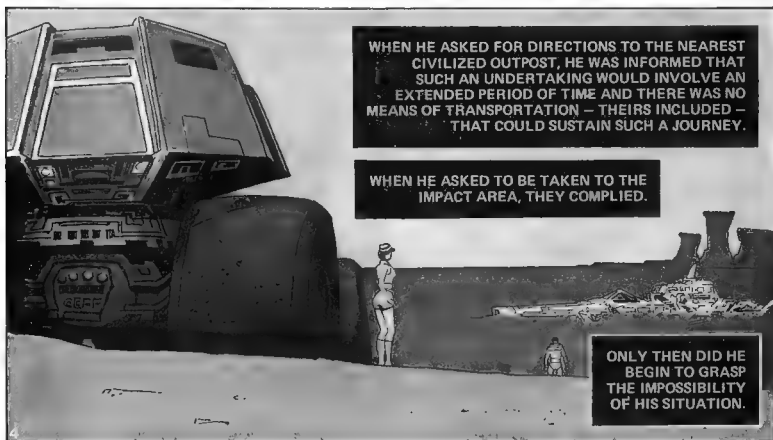
THEN THEY SAW HIM:  
SILVER SPECK  
CUTTING THE HORIZON.



THEIR GARDEN FORGOTTEN,  
THEY FOUND HIM INTACT  
A FEW MILES FROM HIS VESSEL.



WHEN HE ASKED FOR  
A TRANSMITTER, HE  
WAS TOLD THERE WASN'T  
ONE TO BE HAD.



WHEN HE ASKED FOR DIRECTIONS TO THE NEAREST  
CIVILIZED OUTPOST, HE WAS INFORMED THAT  
SUCH AN UNDERTAKING WOULD INVOLVE AN  
EXTENDED PERIOD OF TIME AND THERE WAS NO  
MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION — THEIRS INCLUDED —  
THAT COULD SUSTAIN SUCH A JOURNEY.

WHEN HE ASKED TO BE TAKEN TO THE  
IMPACT AREA, THEY COMPLIED.

ONLY THEN DID HE  
BEGIN TO GRASP  
THE IMPOSSIBILITY  
OF HIS SITUATION.

HE WAS SILENT DURING THE DRIVE BACK,  
HIS MIND DROWNED IN THOUGHTS OF ESCAPE.

AS THEY ENTERED THE YARD, HE HEARD  
THE GHOST ROAR OF COUNTLESS RUINED  
SHIPS SINGING IN THE SUNLIGHT.

SOME OF THESE  
TWISTED, METALLIC  
REMAINS CLOSELY  
RESEMBLED HIS  
OWN DAMAGED SHIP.

HIS OWN.

THE GIRL  
QUIETLY  
AVERTED  
HER GAZE  
AND FOR-  
MULATED  
FUTURE  
POSSIB-  
ILITIES.

WHILE HER MOTHER ASSURED HIM THAT  
HER DAUGHTER'S TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE  
WAS AT HIS DISPOSAL.

THUS BEGAN THE ARDUOUS TASK OF  
MODIFICATION AND RECONSTRUCTION.



THE SEARCH FOR IMPROVEMENT  
AND REFINEMENT.

WHEN LOVE GRADUALLY SURFACED IN THE MAN, IT WAS A HUMAN GESTURE TOO  
ALIEN FOR HER TO BEAR.

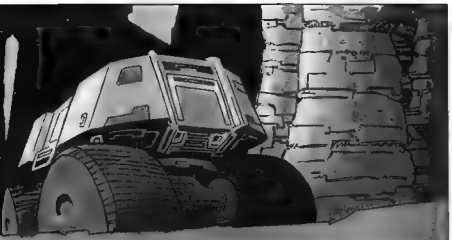


FOR THE SECOND TIME IN RECENT  
MEMORY HE WAS ALONE.

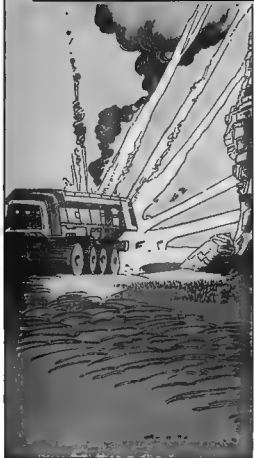




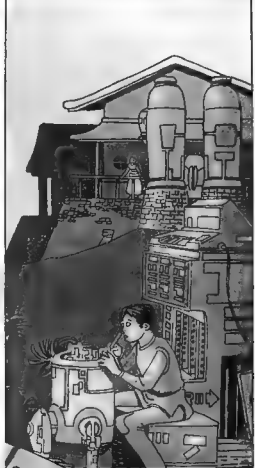
THEN HE  
REMEMBERED:  
A HUSBAND  
THIRTY  
YEARS  
DEAD .

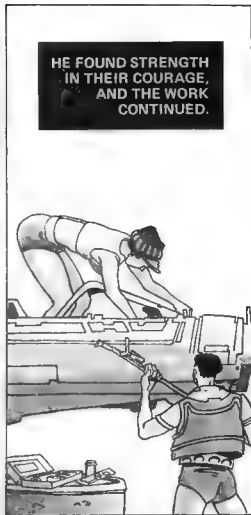


KILLED WHILE REPAIRING A USED TRANSPORT;  
A WIFE ALONE IN SHOCK, GIVING BIRTH TO  
A DAUGHTER SCANT MONTHS LATER;



A DAUGHTER RAISED IN THE TECHNICAL WONDER-  
LAND OF HER LATE FATHER'S BUSINESS .





HE FOUND STRENGTH  
IN THEIR COURAGE,  
AND THE WORK  
CONTINUED.



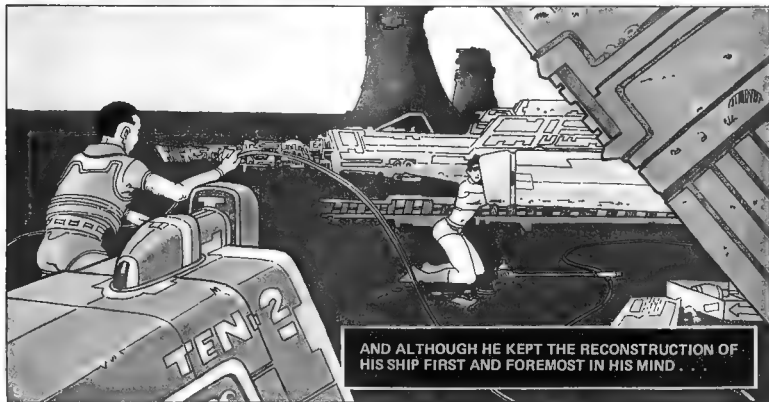
EVENINGS  
HE WOULD  
ENTERTAIN  
THEM...

... WITH STORIES OF  
CIVILIZATION ON OTHER WORLDS.



WHEN THEY ASKED  
HIM WHERE HIS  
HOME WAS, HE  
BECAME RETICENT.

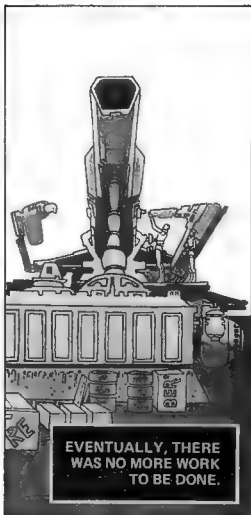




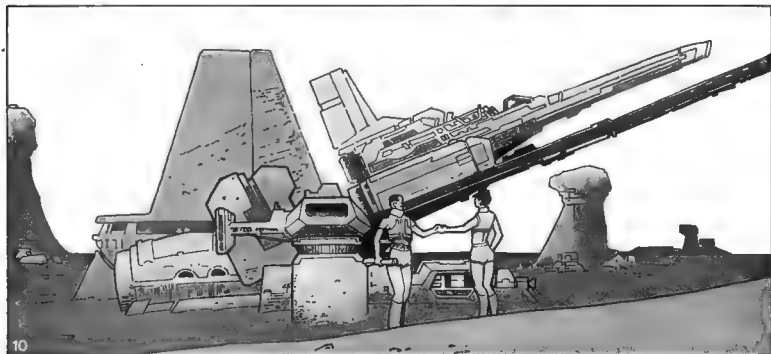
HE BEGAN TO DERIVE GREAT PLEASURE FROM THE SIMPLE THINGS HIS NEW, ALBEIT TEMPORARY, LIFE HAD TO OFFER.



HE BEGAN TO MAKE EXCUSES NOT TO WORK ON THE SHIP. THE DAUGHTER'S REACTION TO SUCH TACTICS QUICKLY TURNED FROM GENTLE PERSUASION TO COLD, VEHEMENT PROTEST. WHEN HER MOTHER SUPPORTED HIS DECISION, SHE WOULD LEAVE TO DO THE WORK ALONE.



EVENTUALLY, THERE WAS NO MORE WORK TO BE DONE.

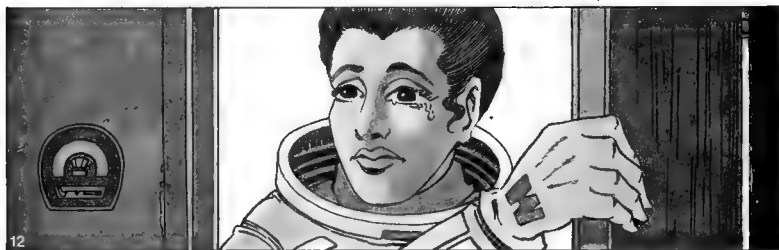


WHEN HE TOLD THEM HE PLANNED TO LEAVE IN THE MORNING, THEY ALL CELEBRATED FAR INTO THE NIGHT.



WHEN HE MADE A FINAL CHECK OF HIS FLIGHT PLAN HE WAS OVERCOME BY AN ALL TOO HUMAN FATIGUE.

A black and white illustration of a man with a mustache, wearing a flight suit, sleeping at a desk. He is holding a pen over a document labeled 'FLIGHT PLAN'. A small figure of a person is visible in the background.

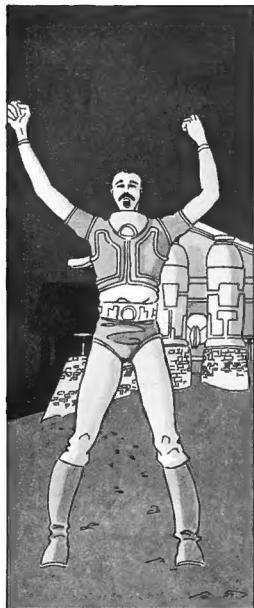






HELPLESS, HE WATCHED  
AS THE OBJECT OF HIS  
AFFECTIONS GUIDED  
THE OBJECT OF HERS  
FAR BEYOND THE  
RANGE OF HIS  
VISION.





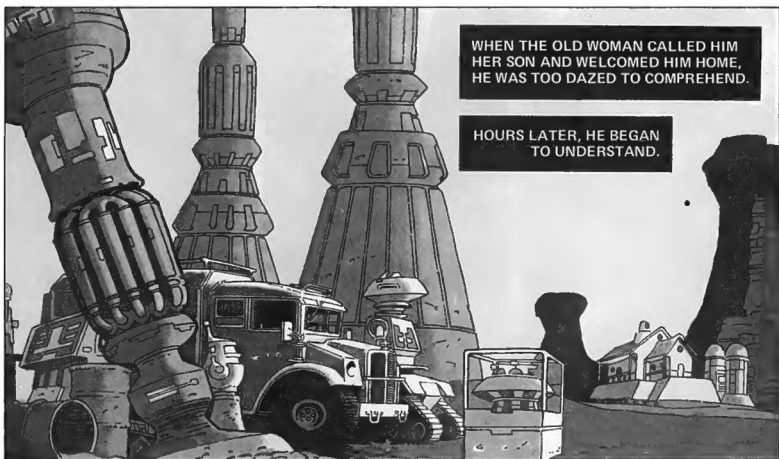
THIS TIME,  
HE HAD LOST  
THEM BOTH.





WHEN THE OLD WOMAN CALLED HIM  
HER SON AND WELCOMED HIM HOME,  
HE WAS TOO DAZED TO COMPREHEND.

HOURS LATER, HE BEGAN  
TO UNDERSTAND.



MOTHER WAS RIGHT, IT HAD BEEN A FAIR TRADE.

SF READING LIKE THIS DOESN'T HAPPEN EVERY DAY!

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